



THE TOWNS HISTORIAN



The NEWSLETTER of the TOWNS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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www.townscountyhistory.org

SPRING 2024

The Towns County Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and sharing the rich history of our area. We meet the second Monday of each month at the Towns County Civic Center

P.O. Box 1182
900 North Main St.
Hiawassee, Georgia
(706) 781-8611

Spring is Here - Finally! By Tyler Osborn, President



Is it just me, or has this winter been unusually long and dreary? I am enjoying this warmer weather we are having and the pops of color that are showing up.

We have started the year off great with some exciting programs! Bruce Roberts gave a great program on some of the local mines in our area (part 2 coming soon), Callie Moore gave a program on the history of Mountain True as well as updated us on the Parrott Feather Project, and March was packed full in celebration of the county's 168th birthday! Jerry Taylor gave two programs, one at our meeting and the commissioners meeting on the history and founding fathers of Towns County. He and I also gave a presentation to the residents of Hiawassee Park on "Saved or Razed – Historic Homes of Towns County", and we were also invited to be a part of Rick Andrews's radio show on 95.1 to discuss the society and our county history.

Jerry was also honored as our County Historian having served in this position for 25 years this year. At both our March meeting and the commissioner's March Meeting, he was recognized for his service and dedication to preserving and protecting our history as Towns County Historian, a volunteer role he was appointed to in 1999. Jerry was also featured in Lake Chatuge Living magazine as their cover story for March. We would be lost without his knowledge, guidance, and support! Thank you, Jerry, for all you do!

I am looking forward to what the rest of the year holds – it will be busy! The courthouse renovations are almost complete, and the county offices will be moving back soon, which means we will be moving home soon! Many people have asked if we have a set date yet, and at this time, no, but I am hoping that at the latest, we can be back to our regular meeting room in August, we will notify everyone and let them know for sure when we are back. We will also have a lot to do to get the Old Rock Jail back up and running – it needs a good cleaning from being closed up for so long, as well as some upkeep and maintenance, so keep an eye out for workdays coming up for that. The Berrong-Oakley House is moving forward, and I have an update on that later in the edition.

I hope everyone enjoys this warmer weather and we look forward to seeing you at our next meeting!

2024 OFFICERS

Tyler Osborn
President

Jerry Taylor
Vice-President

Brandi Cox
Secretary

Patti Wilson
Treasurer

Mary Ann Miller
Membership Secretary



HISTORIANS

Jerry Taylor
County Historian

Jason Lee Edwards
Deputy Historian



Mary Ann Miller
Webmaster/Graphic Designer

Berrong-Oakley House Update

by Tyler Osborn



Winter has been cold – especially at the BOH! With the house being built in 1905, there is no insulation, so whenever I would stop by to check on it during the winter, I could not wait to get back outside to warm up – it was like walking through a deep freezer!

I am glad to report that as of March, we have raised \$50,683.80. This is over ¼ of our \$200,000 goal to get the house restored! I want to thank everyone who has donated to this project. If you feel led to donate, any amount is greatly appreciated and we have several naming opportunities available, starting at \$250. Naming opportunities can be found on our website at www.townscountyhistory.com under the Berrong-Oakley House tab.

I am currently working to get a workday planned to start cleaning out and organizing what is there – and there is a lot. Every bedroom upstairs has its own ‘attic’ space that is packed full of Mrs. Maggie’s old teaching books, building materials from the house, and general stuff that has been collected over the years that needs to be sorted through and determined what is valuable to the history of the house and what is not. The MBRA has agreed to help us bring some muscles to this project – since there is some heavy lifting that is required to haul out the old mattresses, couches, etc.

We have started the plumbing on the lower level, which involved installing an air valve so the

lines could be blown out during the winter to prevent them from freezing. John Chitwood of Service Plumbing was overseeing this and was almost complete, however, he unexpectedly passed away. So, we are awaiting direction from the company as to what to do. Our condolences go out to his family and friends due to his unexpected passing.

The stairs going into the basement were in bad shape and were increasingly getting more dangerous each time someone went down. We have successfully replaced the stairs and I am glad to report that they are now safe and stable to walk down again! We can now get down there to clean out the basement and access what may need to be done.

We have been in discussion with the roof contractor on the status of the shingles. The shingles that we have picked out were out of stock by the manufacturer and he is working on finding another source. It may seem we are being overly picky with the roof, but it is an important aspect when it comes to the National Registry of Historic Places and can easily prevent the house from being listed – so we want to be sure we get everything just the way they want it.

If anyone has any questions or wants more info on our work at the Berrong-Oakley house, feel free to reach out to us at townscountyhistory@gmail.com.

Welcome to our first E-Newsletter!

You may notice you are receiving this edition of the newsletter in a different format, and we wanted to give some explanation behind it. Our newsletter is loved by our members and community, and we love putting it together, however, it has become costly to do so! Traditionally, we print and mail each member a newsletter. With the rising cost of everything, the cost to produce the newsletters was going up. The board had to decide whether to raise the cost of dues to keep up with producing the newsletters or transition to sending out E-Newsletters to save costs. We know times are hard on many of us and we did not want to raise the dues, so we decided that we would transition to E-Newsletters for the members who have email addresses, mail a copy to those who do not, and print a small amount to have available at our meeting. I want to assure everyone that this was not an easy decision for us to make – we consider our members with the decisions we make, and we did not want to sacrifice the quality of the newsletter, and we hope that you will find this new way of accessing the newsletter just as enjoyable.

If you are like me and would like to see the numbers broken down, I have included what the January edition of our newsletter costs below and

what that would look like over a year, based on the cost to produce January's edition. This includes the cost of prints and the cost of stamps only. Design, labeling, folding, sealing, preparing, writing articles, etc. is completed by volunteers and we thank everyone who helps with this!

*January Newsletter Cost to Produce
(Rounded Up to the Nearest Dollar)*

Jan. Newsletter	\$ 295.00
Stamps	\$ 134.00
Total	\$ 429.00
Members	108
Cost/Member	\$ 3.97
Yearly Newsletter Cost	\$ 1,716.00
Yearly Cost/Member	\$ 15.89

DONATIONS

Thank you to the following people for their generous donations to the historical society.

Anonymous

In Honor of Tyler Osborn

Shirley Miller

Berrong-Oakley House

Lemay Anderson

In Honor of Jerry Taylor

Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Klingbeil

Berrong-Oakley House

Mr. and Mrs. Brian Underwood

Mattie Botting

Berrong-Oakley House

In Honor of the Botting Family



We salute *Joan Crothers,* a charter member of the historical society.

Joan Crothers has been a resident of Towns County since 1977, relocating to the area with her young daughter, Linda. While she worked several odd jobs to support herself – cleaning cabins, substitute teaching, transporting passengers to the airport, cashiering at a local restaurant, as well as editing a local newspaper – yet she found time to devote to the community. It may be said of her that if a project is for the good/betterment of the community, then Joan is behind it.

Honored recently by Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw with a good citizen award for her many years of selfless service within the community, Commissioner Bradshaw said, “Ms. Crothers’ dedication to the people of this county has served as an inspiration to me and the whole community. I cannot think of anyone who contributes more time and energy into the community and its people.”

Joan Crothers began volunteering as a Girl Scout leader, with the 4-H Club, and as an active volunteer with the Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO).

The 40-year resident was a charter member of the Towns County Chamber of Commerce, a founding member and former of the Towns County Fire Corps, and a charter member of “PUP” which rescues and assists with the cost associated with spaying and neutering pets. Ms. Crothers has served as a volunteer with the Towns County Garden Club for many years, has helped at Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge,

and has earned an affectionate title as “Queen of the Square” – the result of the countless hours spent landscaping the courthouse grounds and town square each year. Mindful of her civic duties, she served eight years on the Hiwassee City Council.

Ms. Crothers assisted in petitioning to establish the first recycling center in Towns County while volunteering with the Towns County League of Women Voters, Towns County American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), Towns County Hospital Board, Towns County Civic Association, Towns County Historical Society, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), Sheriff’s Auxiliary, and Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Ms. Crothers, an active member of Hiwassee United Methodist Church, continues to remain active in the majority of the volunteer organizations, extending many hours to improving the lives of others.

“I love this place and the people in it,” says Joan Crothers, “When I came here 40 plus years ago, I received good support from the community and the people here accepted us without hesitation. I just want to give back.”

My Memories of Fodder Creek School

By J. Logan Nicholson



I attended a two-room school in Fodder Creek community from the primer to the seventh grade. Grades 4 through 7 were in one room and the little guys were in the second room. I started to school when I was five.

We all brought our lunches from home. We also brought our drinks, normally milk, from home as well. The milk was placed in the little stream down at the foot of the hill and we went down to retrieve it at dinner time (dinner was today's lunch). Lunch was usually biscuits with whatever our mother had cooked extra for breakfast such as bacon, ham, or some meat from the day before. Apples, tomatoes, and corn on the cob, in season, could also be found in our dinner buckets.

Our school house was over on Fodder Creek Road, across the road from Enotah Church. It was a little over a mile walk, back and forth, regardless of the weather without raincoats or umbrellas. We plowed on through the snow in wintertime.

When we graduated from 7th grade, we rode the bus to Hiawassee. It was a completely different story. Five miles each way and nobody brought their lunch from home. I am not sure why.

In high school, we quickly realized that there were two classes of students. Town kids and "bus" or country kids. Those were the "in" kids who lived in or near town. And the rest of us, the majority of us, were the "out" kids. We were poor at home. Three girls and three boys took a lot of clothes and shoes. I did not have the money to eat lunch in the lunchroom at school. I did not want to bring a sack lunch either. So, I waited for lunch until I got home from school. It got so that I did not get hungry until then. I schooled myself not to get hungry.

About the time I hit eighth grade, I began to lose my distance vision. Knowing that my parents could not afford to get me glasses, I never asked, never told them I was having problems. I simply went to the front row in each class so that I could see what the teacher wrote on

the board. When that didn't work, I went up and pretended to sharpen my pencil to get a closer look.

We used those pencils until they were mere stubs. When no one was looking, I often went up to the trash can and took pencils others had discarded. I knew my parents were doing all that they could manage...life was a bit hard for all of us. I learned not to make waves or ask for things they could not afford. My mother said it best when she said, "If wishes were horses, we would all take a ride." It was better to make the wishes silent.

I believe I ate at the school lunchroom twice during my years there. I simply did not have the money. And to be honest, I would have considered it wasteful when I could eat lunch at 3:30pm at home.

Looking back, I do not consider myself deprived. There were lots of things I could not afford - no pictures once a year, no yearbook, no senior trip, no class prom. I did get a ring for graduation (which I promptly lost swimming in the creek). I enjoyed reading and school in general. In my head I made a bucket list of the places I read about that I wanted to visit. In the following years I did go to many of them. Germany, France, Italy, Peru, Mexico and Canada topped that list. When I graduated high school, my name was on almost every card in every book in the library. No matter the subject, boy, girl, horse, dog - I read and enjoyed them all.

Today as I think back on the old schoolhouse, long torn down, I am filled with nothing except good thoughts. Nothing sad. Most of the stories of my life have been written. I am on Chapter 83 and I am hoping the end is nowhere in sight. Along the way I have learned a few things well.

I am happy – content with where I am and who I am with. I picture a long life, continued reading and writing – a certain knowledge that living has awarded me. Love found a way to enfold me and I can see a purpose to all that happened to me along the river of my life. Even the not-so-good parts had a purpose.

I started out poor in some things...rich in others. I continue on that same stream, finding out that, for the most part, I did not need those things so many folks strive for. Fodder Creek Elementary School did indeed prepare me for the life journey I have and still enjoy.



*Contributed by
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Song of the Enotah
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The Spanish (Spaniard) Mountain Mica Mine

by Bruce Roberts



Main Pit (caved in) - Spaniard Mica Mine

While researching information on the mining history of our local area, both gold and other minerals, I came upon references to a mica mine on Spaniard Mountain in south-east Towns County. Excerpts from those references include the following:

"This mine is located nine miles by road south of Hiawassee. It is three miles west of the Hiawassee-Cleveland Road and one mile south of the Owl Creek Road in Glassy Mine Gap... The mine is now in the Chattahoochee National Forest area.

The mine was first opened and worked for a short time by Alfred Taylor about 1900. Since that time, no work has been done at the mine, which is now caved and covered with vegetation. The workings consist of two open pits, one directly in the gap and one about 50 feet below the gap on the north side of the ridge. All of the mica removed came from the pit on the northern side of the ridge where the opening is about 25 feet long, 12 feet wide and 8 feet deep. The pit in the gap is much smaller. The small opening in the gap exposes a quartz vein which is about three feet thick. It contains very little mica. In the dump from the other opening, massive, white quartz fragments up to 12 by 18 inches containing mica books are exposed. Small fragments of potash feldspar, partly kaolinized and containing small lenses of quartz, also are in the dump. The mica found in the dump is clear, flat, splits well, and is colorless. Small amounts of "ribbon" and "A" mica are present. It is reported that nearly 1000 pounds of sheet mica were taken from this mine and sold at Gainesville, Ga. The sheet sizes are reported to range from 2 by 2 to 10 by 10 inches; however, only scrap and a small amount of sheet which would sheet out to 1 by 2 inches were found in the dumps when visited in October, 1942."

Alfred Taylor was the brother of Harve Taylor, a great-grandfather of Jerry Taylor, our TCHS VP and county historian. Harve also lived on Spaniard Mtn., and coincidentally Jerry and I had located and visited his old home site several years ago.



Huge Chestnut Oak (Quercus montana)

My first attempt to find the old mine was in May 2023. I couldn't find Glassy Mine Gap on any maps, either current or old, but figured that Glassy Mine Gap was obviously named for the mica found there. Examining LIDAR views and the roads showing on old maps, I made an educated guess as to a likely location. Unfortunately, after climbing up there, I didn't find any sign of a mine. I did come across a lot of Lady's Slippers, as well as a Chestnut Oak (*Quercus montana*) that measured 5 feet in diameter, rivaling the State Champion of this species in girth. Unfortunately, the tree that I found didn't have a crown as large as the State champion, but it's still a BIG tree!

Re-examining the maps, I chose another possible location further up the mountain, and trekked up there again after leaf-fall in late 2023. I started finding small prospect pits as I gained elevation, and had a good feeling that I was at the right location this time. I soon reached the gap and found the mine as described in the report, as well as numerous smaller prospect pits nearby. As described, the pits/shaft were caved in, and there were no underground works to get me too excited. But it was still fun to find and document another piece of our local mining heritage.



Towns County Historical Society

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All donations are 501(c)(3) tax deductible!

Donation Option:

____ Brick Paver - \$250

____ Donor Wall - \$500

Fireplace Options (Limited Availability)

Sold _____ Main Parlor Fireplace (1) - \$3,000

____ Dining Room Fireplace (1) - \$3,000

____ Grand Hall Fireplace (1) - \$3,000

____ Bedroom Fireplace (1) - \$2,000

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____ Upper Sitting Room (1)

Sold _____ Dining Room (1)

____ Kitchen (1)

____ Breakfast Room (1)

Sold _____ Grand Hall (1)

____ Bedroom (6)

Porches

Sold _____ Front (1) - \$10,000

____ Back (1) - \$8,000

How would you like your plaque/brick to read?

*Donor Wall Plaque Size - 3"X1"

**Naming Option Plaque Size - 4"X2"

***To confirm/reserve limited availability options, please contact Tyler Osborn at (706) 994-2426 or townscounthistory@gmail.com before sending donation.

Donations can be mailed to TC Historical Society, PO Box 1182, Hiawassee, GA 30546

Towns County Historical Society
P.O. Box 1182
Hiawassee, Georgia 30546



Membership Form

Date: _____
New Member _____
Renewing Member _____

Yearly Individual (\$15) _____
Yearly Household (\$20) _____
Life Individual (\$250) _____

Member Name(s): _____

Address _____
City, State, Zip _____

Phone Number: _____
E-mail: _____

I would like to receive reminder calls about meetings via phone/email: _____ Yes _____ No

Please send in this form with your check made payable to: Towns County Historical Society.
PO Box 1182, Hiawassee, GA 30546.

Be sure to check out our website: www.townscountyhistory.org.

I would like to make an additional contribution to:

_____ TC Historical Society _____ The Old Rock Jail _____ Berrong-Oakley House

- in the amount of \$ _____

In honor of: _____

In memory of: _____